

that if we're ever going to control the cost of health care and provide quality health care to everyone, we simply have to have universal coverage. It is not only an ethical imperative; it is a practical necessity.

They also are in the best position to judge the importance of a universal coverage requirement that has comprehensive benefits, including primary and preventive care coverage. We have spent ourselves a fortune of money in America by not taking care of primary and preventive health care in health insurance policies. It has been a big mistake, and we have paid for it.

I appreciate their support for holding down the cost increases. I certainly appreciate their support, as you would expect, for the proposition that the significant amount of taxpayer money that goes into medical education should be now used to encourage more primary and family practitioners in a country in which we are now, frankly, graduating a disastrously low number of family doctors from our medical schools.

I am most grateful, however, again, because the presence of these physicians here debunks the notion that the plan we have presented is some sort of big Government, bureaucratic plan that erodes the doctor-patient relationship and reestablishes its basic principles. Every other advanced country in the world has figured out how to cover their citizens but us. And we're spending 50 percent more of our income on health care than most countries. And too much of it is going to people who are not doctors, who are not nurses, who are not providing hospital or clinical care, but who are just shuffling papers in a maze that is the most bureaucratic, complicated system on the face of the Earth today.

Now, I also want to say that this morning I received a letter, an interesting letter from the American Medical Association, which represents fewer than 300,000 doctors, but still a substantial number—just not as many as are represented on this stage, but still a large number—reaffirming, reaffirming the support of the AMA for universal coverage and clarifying the position taken by the house of delegates recently, in which Dr. Todd says that they are still for universal coverage, that they are not opposed to an employer man-

date, but that they think other options for achieving universal coverage in addition to an employer mandate should be considered. And I appreciate that, and I think we all should.

I do not wish this debate in this coming year to become unduly partisan, both within the medical community or the American political community. The truth is that all Americans have a common interest in universal coverage, primary and preventive care, slowing the rate of medical inflation, and reducing the incredible bureaucracy and regulatory intrusion into the health care system. All Americans have a common interest in that. They have an economic interest; they have a human interest, every family.

As I have said many times, there are very few families in this country that are not at risk of losing their health care. Most of them just don't know it until they lose it, their coverage. So we all have a common interest. And at this holiday season I would hope that we could do away with the destructive and counterproductive labels. I would hope we'll all get a laugh when we think about this eminent panel of Socialists up here on the platform—[laughter]—and learn to laugh about that and in this holiday season remind ourselves that perhaps the greatest gift we can give to our country in common is a greater sense of community and security, a major portion of which is universal health care.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Dr. Betty Lowe, president, American Academy of Pediatrics; Dr. William Coleman, president, American Academy of Family Physicians; and Dr. James Todd, executive vice president, American Medical Association. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Admiral Bobby R. Inman To Be Secretary of Defense December 16, 1993

Ladies and gentlemen, yesterday I announced that Secretary Aspin would be step-

ping down as Secretary of Defense next month after a year of devoted service. I want to stress again how deeply grateful I am on behalf of all Americans for his hard work and his many unique contributions to the Pentagon and to our national defense.

To ensure the greatest possible continuity, I wanted to announce a successor as soon as possible. So today, I am very pleased to announce my intent to nominate Admiral Bob Inman as the next Secretary of Defense.

Admiral Inman was one of our Nation's highest ranking and most respected military officers. He was a four-star admiral whose career in the Navy and in our intelligence community and in private business has won him praise from both Democrats and Republicans who admire his intellect, his integrity, and his leadership ability.

The Admiral's experience in serving our Nation is truly impressive. He personally briefed Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. He held senior positions under Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, and Bush. Former Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger called Admiral Inman "a national asset." And I know he will be a national asset as Secretary of Defense.

He brings to this job the kind of character all Americans respect. The son of a gas station owner in a small east Texas town, he rose to distinction and success on the basis of his brains, his talent, and his hard work. He finished high school at 15, graduated from college at 19, joined the Naval Reserve at 20, and then launched an impressive 31-year career in the Navy. He served on an aircraft carrier, two cruisers, and a destroyer as well as on onshore assignments as an analyst for naval intelligence. In 1976, at the age of 45, he became the youngest vice admiral in peacetime history. Bob Inman's stellar intelligence work caught the attention of many military and civilian leaders and prompted his elevation to several high posts in the intelligence community. He served as Vice Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Director of the National Security Agency, and Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Because of his outstanding service, he was awarded the National Security Medal by President Carter.

Over the past decade since Admiral Inman left Government, he served in a wide range of private sector positions, including CEO of two private sector electronics firms, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, and a teacher at his alma mater, the University of Texas. He's also served on 11 not-for-profit corporate boards. And in all these roles, Admiral Inman has established a reputation for penetrating analysis, strong leadership, and a rock-solid commitment to this Nation's security. Those qualities will serve our Nation well as the Admiral becomes our next Secretary of Defense.

This is a time of great change in our world. We must build on the work Les Aspin began with a bottom-up review to ensure that we have the right forces and strategy for this new era. We must ensure that, even as we reduce force levels, our military remains ready to fight and win on a moment's notice. We must ensure that our men and women in uniform remain the best trained, the best equipped, the best prepared fighting force on Earth. And we must maintain and build strong bipartisan support in the Congress and in the country for the foreign policy and national defense interests of our Nation.

I am confident that Admiral Inman is the right leader to meet these demanding challenges. I am grateful that he's agreed to make the personal sacrifices necessary to return to full-time Government service and to accept this important assignment at this pivotal time in world events. I'm delighted that he will be joining our national security team, and I thank him for his service to the Nation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:33 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement on Signing the Preventive Health Amendments of 1993

December 16, 1993

Since the beginning of my Administration, we have worked with the Congress on ways to strengthen the Nation's health care system. This partnership for the personal security of America's families moved forward